



KEEPING ARIZONA SAFE, STRONG AND PROSPEROUS

Voluntary Full Day Kindergarten

To compete in the knowledge-based economy of tomorrow, every child in Arizona must have access to quality education – from kindergarten to high school and beyond. Kindergarten is increasingly important as it serves as a foundation to a lifetime of learning.

The Arizona academic standards assume a certain level of literacy for students who arrive to the first grade. A full day gives teachers time to assist student with multiple kindergarten standards intended to create this first grade readiness. Not only do students learn letters, words and sentence construction, they learn how to play and learn in a group, use the arts to express themselves and do basic math exercises. These students are truly ready for all the elementary school has to offer.

Nationally, we know that students who attend a full-day kindergarten class are more likely than their peers to read at grade level, have good attendance and do well in science. Teachers and parents in these districts already report overwhelmingly positive results.

In Governor Janet Napolitano's 2004 State of the State Address, she announced, "the time has now come for all parents in Arizona to have the option for their children to participate in full-day K." The Governor proposed an aggressive plan to implement voluntary full-day kindergarten into Arizona schools. Her plan has been overwhelmingly successful.

- In FY 2004-05, \$25 million was budgeted for schools where at least 90 percent of the students participated in the federal free or reduced-fee lunch program. This money was used to pay teachers, buy supplies and renovate classrooms to make them suitable for our youngest students. In this first year, state funded voluntary full-day kindergarten gave 10,000 students the time and standards they needed to be truly first-grade ready.
- In FY 2005-06, an additional \$17 million was budgeted for schools where at least 80 percent of the students participated in the federal free or reduced-fee lunch program bringing the total number of students served to 20,000.
- This year, FY 2006-07, the Governor's budget provides enough money to take voluntary full-day kindergarten to every district and charter school in Arizona.

"Parents have demanded voluntary full-day kindergarten," the Governor said in her 2006 State of the State address. "Young minds are hungry for information and develop quickly – the more they learn, the more they can learn.

"Let's offer full-day kindergarten to every parent who wants it, and let's do it this year."